

Wine & Spirits Top 100

Recently, a friend told me about a great bottle wine she had ordered at Chez Panisse. It was red, and it had the restaurant's name on it. "I wish I knew what it was," she said. "Well, it was a bottle of Green & Red Zinfandel," I told her, adding that her last clue gave it away.

Locavore zin: Green & Red has been the house red wine at Chez Panisse since 1986, the most popular local choice on a list that spans the globe, a red wine with the kind of Southern French influence that inspired the restaurant. In this case, the south of France met Bordeaux where Jay Heminway worked a college summer with Alexis Lichine at Château Lascombs, drinking a lot of Algerian wine and getting to taste most of the Bordeaux 1959's.

No dimpled fruit: Back in the states, his interest in claret turned to zin, helped along by a 1968 Deaver Vineyard Zinfandel made by Sutter home, and a Mayacamas zin of the same era. He and his partner, Pam, decided to plant 4 acres of the variety at the ranch they purchased in the eastern hills of Napa Valley where zin had thrived in the 19th century. He now has three vineyards, including Chile's Mill, surrounding his winery, and Tip Top, a northeast-facing slope he planted in the 1990s, adding a bit of sauvignon blanc, syrah and viognier to the mix. After phylloxera hit Napa Valley, he replanted with the selection from the Trentadue's ancient vines in Geyserville. And in 2013, he installed a vibrating sorting table to remove raisined fruit. That helped him produce a fresh, fruit – driven 2013 Tip Top Vineyard zinfandel, a wine that captures the Napa Valley chaparral in scents of bay and black olives and sunny flavors of plums and strawberries.

Bringing the house red home: Heminway's 2013 Chile's Canyon Vineyards Zinfandel, a blend of all three blocks, is gentler than the tiptop, with the bribery taste of black raspberries and the stemmy green scent of strawberry leaves. It's basically the same wine my friend enjoyed at shares panties, a clean California red saturated with dark fruit flavor. – J. G.

Top scoring wines

92 | '13 Napa Valley Chiles Canyon Vineyards Zinfandel \$24 (2 /16)